



PREPARATORY COMMISSION FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
RENEWABLE  
ENERGY AGENCY **IRENA**

January, 2011



# FAST FACTS ABOUT IRENA

Founding conference:	26 January 2009 in Bonn, Germany
Founding signatories:	75
Members:	149*
Ratifications:	50*
First Assembly:	4-5 April 2011
Headquarters:	Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Offices:	Bonn, Germany and Vienna, Austria**
Interim Director-General:	Adnan Z. Amin
Staff members:	38*
Nationalities:	26*

\* as of December 2010

\*\* envisaged to become operational in 2011

***“We shouldn’t lose any more time in accelerating the transition to renewable energy.”***

Hermann Scheer, founding father of IRENA (1944-2010)

***“I’d put my money on the sun and solar energy. What a source of power! I hope we don’t have to wait until oil and coal run out before we tackle that.”***

Thomas Edison (1847-1931)



Up until the 19th century and the industrial revolution, renewable resources were the main energy sources for all uses. The subsequent widespread availability of fossil fuels has fuelled the rapid development of the global economy and provided a standard of living for many that would have been inconceivable even a century ago, but with unintended consequences.

The massive use of fossil energy, particularly by high and middle income countries, has led – directly and indirectly – to serious issues of environmental pollution and the unprecedented build-up of atmospheric carbon. We are now facing the prospect of irreversible climate change, undermining our quality of life worldwide. On the other side of the spectrum are low-income countries: according to the United Nations, approximately 3 billion people worldwide rely on traditional biomass for cooking and heating, and about 2.5 billion have either unreliable or no access to electricity. If we are to address these major, albeit different challenges, we must wean ourselves off our near-total dependence on fossil fuels and move decisively towards cleaner forms of energy, while, at the same time, meeting the energy access needs of the poor on an equitable basis.

The creation of IRENA has confirmed the commitment of governments to this agenda. It is the first global intergovernmental organisation established in decades – a clear acknowledgement that renewable energy requires a strong global champion.

# ABOUT IRENA

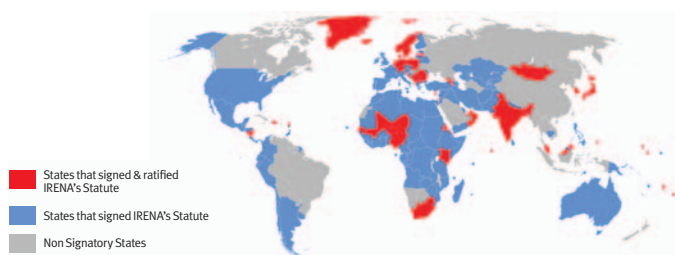
IRENA is a new intergovernmental organisation dedicated to the promotion of renewable energy, whose articles of association are formally agreed on by governments and parliaments around the world. IRENA's Statute was adopted on 26 January 2009 in Bonn, Germany, by 75 founding signatory states.

Since its founding, IRENA has experienced unprecedented growth in terms of its membership. As of December 2010, 148 countries and the European Union had become Members of IRENA. Within two years of its founding, 50 Members had already ratified the agreement.

IRENA's membership is diverse. Some of its Members are oil producers, while others are small island states, entirely dependent on fossil fuel imports for their energy. Many rely on traditional biomass to satisfy their basic needs – like in Sub-Saharan Africa. Others have decades of experience in renewable energy generation. Such a diverse membership has differing requirements, as well as a wealth of experience, resources and specialist knowledge. IRENA has a privileged position that enables it to tap into existing resources and capacities, and link them to those in most need.

## First Session of the Assembly 4th-5th April 2011

In April 2011, Members will convene the First Assembly of IRENA. This meeting will be a major milestone in the history of the Agency. On 4th April the Preparatory Commission of IRENA will no longer exist and the Agency's permanent organs will be formed, including the Assembly, the Council and the Secretariat. In this meeting, the Assembly will set the strategic vision and direction for IRENA and adopt a work programme that will lay the foundations for the Agency's future.



***“This is a moment of great opportunity and significance as the world looks for solutions to the twin challenges of climate change and sustainable development, and it is our commitment to you that we will do our very best to ensure that the first IRENA Assembly launches this process.”***

Adnan Z. Amin, IRENA Interim Director-General (2010)

# OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

IRENA's Statute provides a framework in which the Agency is required to operate. Its main objective is the promotion of "the widespread and increased adoption and the sustainable use of all forms of renewable energy" (Article II, Statute). This concerns all forms of energy produced from renewable sources in a sustainable manner, including bioenergy, geothermal energy, hydropower, ocean, solar, and wind energy.

To achieve this objective, IRENA needs to:

- ★ Be a center of excellence for renewable energy technology;
- ★ Act as a facilitator and catalyst;
- ★ Provide experience for practical applications and policies;
- ★ Offer support on all matters relating to renewable energy; and
- ★ Help countries to benefit from the development and transfer of knowledge.

In the performance of its activities, IRENA acts in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations to promote peace and international cooperation, and in conformity with policies of the United Nations aimed at furthering sustainable development.



*Members of the IRENA team in Abu Dhabi*

***"Expanding access to affordable, clean energy is critical for realising the Millennium Development Goals and enabling sustainable development across much of the globe."***

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General (2010)

# STAKEHOLDER COMMUNITY

IRENA intends to draw on the best ideas, knowledge, experience and information so that it can offer an optimal level of service to its constituency. In addition, as an advocate for renewable energy within the international system, there is a large group of potential allies pushing for the changes needed in order for renewable energy to play an ever-increasing role in world energy production.

IRENA seeks to have an impact by having a clear position in the world of renewable energy and providing a range of well-understood services that complement what other players in the renewable energy community can offer and that provide an international framework to promote best practices. This community is large, complex and rapidly evolving. IRENA will not duplicate what others are doing, but will seek out the synergies to be established and developed. It will become a centre for collaboration and a platform upon which each stakeholder can demonstrate its knowledge, activities and concerns.

IRENA Members are responsible for leading the way in the field of renewable energy, but they cannot do it alone. Numerous international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations are natural and indispensable partners. Similarly, many companies in the private sector are already seizing the opportunities that the renewable energy field offers. Civil society groups are vocal advocates and watchdogs of actions by governments, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

IRENA is uniquely positioned to bring together different constituencies. It aims to become the glue that binds all of these parts together and makes it a powerful force in advancing the agenda of the widespread adoption and use of renewable energy, with the ultimate goal of safeguarding the hope for a sustainable future.



***“...affirming their desire to establish an international organisation for renewable energy that facilitates the cooperation between its Members, while also establishing a close collaboration with existing organisations that promote the use of renewable energy.”***

The Statute of IRENA



## DEMAND-DRIVEN ASSISTANCE

IRENA's diverse membership requires an agile and adaptable Agency that is able to respond quickly and effectively. IRENA will remain a neutral player that, when required, can assist its Members in navigating among competing interests, and offer impartial, disinterested advice on renewable energy and solutions to individual Members' energy needs. To do this, IRENA will keep abreast of the latest developments in policy, regulations, institutional arrangements, financial mechanisms and technologies relating to renewable energy.

As stipulated in its Statute, IRENA's special focus will be on the contribution of renewable energy to, among other things, economic growth and social cohesion, including poverty alleviation and sustainable development. In this context, IRENA's work with its developing country Members is particularly important. In order to help map out the transition to an energy mix in which renewables find their optimal place, IRENA will seek out the solutions that are most appropriate to a country's circumstances and facilitate access to sources of technical assistance.



***“My parents were of the generation that took part in the industrial revolution and gave me the economic standards that I have today. It is now my turn to give my children a hopeful future.”***

Maud Olofsson, Swedish Deputy Prime Minister (2007)



**The establishment of IRENA was timely and necessary. Its founding Members were inspired by the opportunities offered by renewable energy, convinced of its positive role in the context of climate change and sustainable development, and motivated by the possibilities of access to energy for those who need it the most. IRENA has an important role to play in this context and its success will help to safeguard the hope of a decent life for future generations.**

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